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ABSTRACT

As assessed in 1989, the prior quarter of a century had seen community colleges emerge from the shadow of elementary and secondary education governance. This document notes several changes in the types of state-level boards and agencies that coordinate or govern public community colleges. Between 1989 and 1996 the only net changes in state-level structures for community colleges were: the abolition of the State Board of Community Colleges in Maryland, and the substitution of the Maryland Higher Education Commission; the replacement of the New Jersey State Board of Higher Education with the Commission of Higher Education; and the listing of the South Dakota Board of Regents as the state-level board responsible for community colleges. The author states that the third edition of his book on state systems of community colleges will include considerable data regarding trends in governance, finance, educational assessment, accountability, and economic development. To some extent the third edition will contain information comparable to the 1980 national study on community college funding and accountability. The author expects that state-level community college functions in recent years have changed to a far greater degree than would be revealed by merely examining gross changes in state-level structures for community college governance. (VWC)

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EMERGING PATTERNS IN STATE LEVEL COMMUNITY COLLEGE GOVERNANCE: A STATUS REPORT

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April 12, 1996

The California State Legislature adopted the Caminetti Upward Extension Act in 1907 and, in 1917, the Ballard Act, the latter of which authorized state and county tax support for public junior colleges. Other states soon began to establish, convert other types of institutions, generically authorize and regulate public two-year colleges. Within approximately the next decade, Arkansas, Illinois, Iowa, Michigan, Mississippi, Missouri, Oklahoma, and Texas had followed California's lead. Northeastern states were slow to adopt legislation authorizing public two-year colleges, primarily because of their established tradition of private collegiate education and, in 1929, Springfield Junior College in Massachusetts became the first public junior college in the Northeast (Witt, et al., 1994, pp. 35-66).Martorana found in a 1963 study that there were public junior colleges in 38 states.

As was true in California, most states initially regulated public junior colleges through state boards and departments of education that had been established for public elementary and secondary schools. Based on our 1989 study (Fountain and Tollefson, 1989), and comparing it to Martorana's 1963 study, Ben Fountain and I concluded, "In the past quarter of a century, community colleges have emerged from the shadow of elementary and secondary education" (Tollefson and Fountain, 1992, p. 9). During that period, we noted several changes in the types of state-level

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boards and agencies that coordinated or governed public community colleges. Those changes included:

-An increase from 38 states to 49 that had statewide public community college systems;

-A decline from 26 to 6 states that coordinated community colleges through state boards of education;

-An increase from 5 to 13 states that governed community colleges through state boards of regents; and

-A decline from 12 states to 7 that assigned community college coordination to state boards or commissions of higher education; and, perhaps most significantly;

-An increase from 6 to 22 states with separate state boards or commissions for community colleges.

In the past seven years, relatively few changes in state-level structures for community colleges have occurred. Based upon our 1992 book (Tollefson and Fountain,1992) and on a list of state directors of community colleges obtained from the American Association of Community Colleges in February 1996, the only such net changes in evidence are:

-The abolition of the State Board of Community Colleges in Maryland, and the substitution of the Maryland Higher Education Commission;

-The replacement of the New Jersey State Board of Higher Education with the Commission of Higher Education; and

-The listing of the South Dakota Board of Regents as the state-level board responsible for community colleges.

In Iowa and Tennessee, bills have been introduced in the state legislatures to change the state-level community college structures. Iowa would shift the responsibility from the State Board of Education to the State Board of Regents, with allegedly "...serious implications for the community colleges with their tradition of local control." ("State by State", March 26, 1996,

(p.9). In Tennessee, the bill would replace the Tennessee Board of Regents, which currently governs the community colleges, and the University of Tennessee Board of Trustees, with a single university governing board. The bill also would establish a new state board for community colleges.

In a 1978 study, I found that many state boards and agencies had established community college curriculum and degree standards. In a 1980 study, Adkins, Buysse and I found considerable state-level regulations of funding and financial accountability of forty-nine community colleges. Bill Ingram and I (1996) recently found a high correllation between states' proportional funding of community colleges and the decision-making authority that state boards and agencies have for community colleges. We also found, however, that, in actual practice, much of that authority is delegated to local community colleges. We have invited Rick Garrett and Bill Ingram to help us. It will depart from the descriptive nature of the first two editions and add a substantial amount of analysis, to some extent updating our 1978 and 1980 studies, as the 1989 and 1992 editions of our book.

David Pierce and Bob Pedersen, of the American Association of Community Colleges, haved asked Ben Fountain and me to develop the third edition of our book on state systems of community colleges. Unlike the first two editions, the new one will include considerable analysis of national data regarding trends in governance, finance, educational assessment, accountability and economic development. To some extent the third edition will

contain information comparable to our 1980 national study on community college funding and accountability (Tollefson, et al., 1980). My expectation is that state-level community college functions in recent years have changed to a far greater degree than would be revealed by merely examining gross changes in state-level structures for community college goverance.

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